

Eat Right When Money's Tight

DURHAM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NUTRITION DIVISION



CHECK OUT:

- MyPyramid at www.mypyramid.gov for personalized eating plans, advice to make smart choices from every food group and help to balance food and physical activity.
- *Loving Your Family Feeding Their Future* at www.foodstamp.nal.usda.gov. Available in English and Spanish; provides menus, recipes, and tips on buying and serving healthier foods.
- *Recipe Finder* at <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov> for over 100 low cost, nutritious and delicious recipes.

Now More Than Ever, Nutrition is Important

With prices rising, most people are feeling a financial crunch these days. However, cutting back on nutritious foods can cost you in health care expenses in the long run.

"In a time when many people find themselves

without health insurance, we must make sure to eat better than usual so that we are less likely to get sick" says Kelly Warnock, MPH, RD, LDN, Durham County Health Department Nutrition Specialist.

"Jeopardizing our health because we are trying to save money is not worth it

nor is it necessary. Through careful planning, budgeting and food selection we can spend less but still eat well," Warnock states.

Read on for tips on how to stretch your food dollars and stay healthy during a time of economic hardship.

Eat More Meals At Home



Save money by making more meals at home.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Americans spend more than 40 percent of their food dollars away from home. These foods typically cost two to three times more than similar items prepared at home and are usually less nutritious.

To identify areas where you can cut spending, keep track of all money spent on fast food, at restaurants and for snacks and beverages from vending machines, convenience stores and concession stands. Make cuts where possible. Pack meals and snacks from home when you are on the go.

Balance Your Meals

Eating balanced meals can save you money. Balanced meals can make you feel full faster and keep you full longer so you eat less overall. They can also help reduce healthcare costs.

- Try to include at least 4 food groups in each meal.
- Eat snacks of at least 2 food groups.
- Aim to fill 1/2 your plate with vegetables.
- Limit servings of meat to the size of a deck of cards.

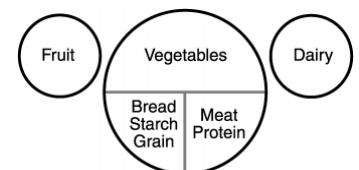


Plate Method

The **Plate Method** works by visualizing how much space each of the major food groups should occupy on a plate.



Fruits and vegetables are usually less expensive when they are in season. Farmers' Markets always carry what is in season.



Rethink Your Drink!

Soft drinks, fruit drinks, punch, sweet tea, and other sweet drinks cost a lot of money and contain few nutrients.

Buying just one can of soda every day for a year can cost \$275!

How Much: \$ \$ Available For Food

Know the resources you have to spend on food.

- Make a shopping list based on the resources you have to spend.
- Buy only the amounts of fresh foods you can use before they spoil.
- Consider frozen or shelf stable items that last longer.
- Use foods you already have to plan menus. Add missing foods to your shopping list.

Planning: The First Step

Before going to the grocery store, check what foods you already have in your pantry or refrigerator.

Once you know what foods you have, ask these questions:

- What meals and recipes can I make using the foods I have?

- Can I mix foods together to make a tasty and nutritious meal?

- What foods does my family need for good health?

Then:

- Plan what recipes you will make using your list of foods.

- Be sure to include vegetables, fruits, and whole grains in your meals.
- Once you plan your menus, make a new list for missing foods you need to buy.

Shopping: Before, During, and After

Before Shopping

- Plan your meals. Planning helps put leftovers to good use.
- Make a shopping list. This helps you stick to your budget.
- Look for coupons, sales and store specials.
- For added savings sign up for the store discount card.

During Shopping

- Don't shop when you are hungry. It is easier to stick to your shopping list.
- Try store brands. They usually cost less.
- Compare products for the best deal.
- Check sell by dates. Buy the freshest food possible. It lasts longer.

After Shopping

- Store food right away to preserve freshness.
- Freeze food to prevent spoiling.
- Divide foods into small portions for children and elderly to prevent waste.
- Use foods with the earliest expiration dates first.

Tips: Best Buys for Cost and Nutrition

Breads and Grains

- Whole grains, like whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta, whole grain cereals, and oatmeal, provide the most nutrition for your money.
- Look for bargains on day old bread. It costs less but is still nutritious.
- Buy regular rice, oatmeal and grits instead of instant to save on money, sugar and calories.

Vegetables and Salad

- Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. Seal tightly in the freezer between uses.

- Avoid pre-bagged salad mixes. They are usually more expensive and spoil faster.

Fruits

- Buy fresh fruits in season, when they generally cost less.
- Frozen and canned fruits are a smart choice all year round.

Low-Fat Milk Products

- Buy fresh, low-fat or fat free milk in the largest size that can be used before spoiling.
- Larger containers cost less per serving.
- Ultra-pasteurized milk has a longer expiration date and won't spoil as fast.

Meat and Beans

- Chuck or bottom round roast has less fat and is cheaper than sirloin.
- Dried beans and peas are a good source of protein and fiber. Before cooking, they last a long time without spoiling.
- Look for specials at the meat counter. Buy meat on sale for big savings.
- Buy meat in bulk packages to save money. Freeze portions you might not use right away to prevent spoiling.

Tips: A Few Changes Make A Big Difference

Stretch Leftovers

- Anytime you cook a meal that can be easily doubled, take the extra half and place it in the freezer to eat later.
- Fold leftover cooked vegetables into tomato or meat sauce or add them to a casserole.
- Combine leftover meats or beans, canned tomatoes or salsa, rice or barley, and a bag of frozen vegetables to make a quick healthy chili.

Switch Up Your Protein.

- A healthy diet does not have to include meat, which can be expensive.
- Peanut butter, eggs, beans, peas, cottage cheese, and soy products are great protein sources that are often cheaper than meat.
- Cut back the amount of meat you use in a casserole, stew, stir fry, or pasta dish. The flavor of a little meat goes a long way.

Don't Cut Out Fruits and Veggies

- Eating a diet full of fruits and vegetables is one of the best ways to stay healthy.
- Whether they are fresh, frozen or canned, eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Adding a bag of frozen vegetables to stews, soup, casseroles, and meat dishes also makes the dish go further.
- Fruits and vegetables also help keep you feeling full longer so that you may eat and buy less food.

Lentil Chili Soup

Serves: 8

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic or 1 teaspoon dried garlic
- 2 cups chopped onion (about 1 large onion)
- 1 pound frozen crinkle cut carrots
- 1 ½ cups dry lentils
- 4 cups low sodium vegetable or tomato juice (like V8)
- 5 cups water
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups chunky salsa



Directions:

1. Place the vegetable oil in a large soup pot. Heat over medium high heat.
2. Add the garlic and onion. Sauté until onion is golden, about 2-3 minutes.
3. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well.
4. Bring to a boil. Then reduce heat and simmer.
5. Cook uncovered until the lentils are tender, about 35 minutes. Serve hot.

Nutrition Facts per 1 cup serving: 220 calories, 3.5 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 500 mg sodium, 11 g fiber, 10 g protein, 210% vitamin A, 70% Vitamin C, 10% Calcium, 15% Iron.

Adapted from: Food and health communications. <http://communicatingfoodforhealth.com/recipes.php>

Quick Skillet Lasagna

Serves: 7

Ingredients:

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| • 1/2 cup chopped onion | • 1 1/2 cups water |
| • 1/2 pound ground beef | • 1 teaspoon garlic powder (optional) |
| • 1 can (16 ounce) tomatoes | • 2 cups cooked cholesterol-free egg noodles |
| • 1 can (6 ounce) tomato paste | • 3/4 cup low fat cottage cheese |
| • 1 teaspoon parsley (optional) | • 1/4 cup parmesan or mozzarella cheese |

Instructions:

1. Chop onion. Cook beef and onion, in the frying pan until beef is brown and onion is tender. Drain off excess fat.
2. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, parsley, water, and garlic powder to the beef mixture. Bring to a boil and simmer until sauce is thick, about 25 minutes.
3. While beef mixture is cooking, cook noodles in a saucepan according to directions. Drain.
4. Add cooked, drained noodles to the beef mixture. Stir to prevent sticking.
5. Mix cheeses and drop by spoonfuls into the frying pan.
6. Cover and heat over low heat for about 5 minutes until cheese is melted.

Note: To increase nutritional value, add other fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables like mushrooms or spinach.

Nutrition facts per 1 cup serving: 200 calories, 6 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 40 mg cholesterol, 4 g fiber, 15 g protein.

Source: SNAP-Ed Connection Recipe Finder <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>

Information adapted from the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service Eating Right when Money is Tight Tip Sheet., <http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/pdf/eatrightwhenmoneystight.pdf>



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